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# JAIL INDUSTRIES JOURNAL

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## New Information Source

*Jail Industries in Washington State*

**By Dean Mason**

*Executive Director, Jail Industries Board*

Welcome to the first edition of the Jail Industries Journal, a new quarterly collection of information and news compiled by the Washington State Jail Industries Board. Our goal is to provide readers with information and training that supports the mission of the board and promotes the expansion of jail work opportunities for offenders.

Upcoming issues will include updates on the work of the Jail Industries Board, industries news from jails around the state, articles on best practices in jail industries from around the world, resources for policy development and program design, and other items of interest.

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## The Jail Industries Board

*A Quick Overview*

The Washington State Legislature established the Jail Industries Board in 1993 under RCW 36.110.

### Legislative Intent

“It is the purpose and intent of the legislature, through this chapter, to establish a state-wide jail industries program designed to promote inmate rehabilitation through meaningful work experience and reduce the costs of incarceration.”



### Mission

Provide statewide leadership for jails to promote and mobilize employment focused community reentry programs through partnerships with labor, business, victims, communities, social service agencies and government.

- The Jail Industries Board is a 21-member volunteer board whose goal is to help city and county governments establish and maintain inmate work programs.
- Criminal justice and local government representatives are appointed by associations representing those interests.
- Business, labor, and state agency representatives are appointed by the Governor.
- The board employs a fulltime Executive Director who is responsible for the day to day operations of the agency, research, program development, and liaison with jails, local governments and other state agencies.

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# Yakima County Launches New Programs

By Terri Beernink

*Programs Officer, Yakima County Department of Corrections*

March 2009 launched the first ever Flagging & Forklift classes for eligible inmates at Yakima County Department of Corrections (YDOC). The goal of these programs is to provide inmates with skills that they can use to obtain a job when released to the community.

In September 2008, The Jail Industries Board awarded YDOC \$11,588 in funding from the Jail to Work: Cultivating Offender Reentry grant. The grant provided funding for Forklift Train the Trainer (T4T) classes for two officers, Flagging T4T classes for two officers, and computers.

In addition to the grant, Dean Mason, Executive Director of the Jail Industries Board and Ken Pollard, General Manager for the Yakima subsidiary of Papé Material Handling, the West's number one forklift dealer, negotiated the donation of a forklift valued at almost \$14,000.



With the goal of breaking down barriers that usually occur between the time an inmate is released and when they are able to obtain employment, YDOC has already graduated ten men and twelve women with Washington State forklift certifications. Additionally, nine women and twelve men have achieved certification as flaggers. There will be many more of these graduations to come due to the sustainability built into the program by utilizing facility staff as trainers!

*New Information Source continued...*

Does your jail have a new industries program? Would you like to share best practices from your programs with other jails? Do you have questions that you would like to see answered in this forum for the benefit of all? The intent of this journal is to showcase the excellent work you do and to provide you the tools to do even more. Please submit your articles, ideas or requests to [damason@doc1.wa.gov](mailto:damason@doc1.wa.gov).

## A FEW QUICK DEFINITIONS

- **Jail Industry** - "...uses jail inmate labor, to create a product or deliver a service, that has value, and for which inmates receive some form of compensation."
- **Reentry** – The return of an individual to the community from incarceration in a jail or prison. Successful reentry is not achieved until the individual has fully complied with the terms of their release and supervision in the community, and does not return to incarceration.
- **Recidivism** - Chronic criminal behavior leading to numerous arrests and re-imprisonment.
- **Best Practice** - A superior method or innovative practice that contributes to the improved performance of an organization or program, usually recognized as 'best' by other peer organizations.
- **Benchmark** - Reference point or standard against which performance or achievements can be assessed. A benchmark refers to the performance that has been achieved in the recent past by other comparable organizations, or what can be reasonably inferred to have been achieved in the circumstances

## SOME NATIONAL STATISTICS

- The Pew Center found in 2008 that 1 in 100 adults in America are in jail or prison.
- In 2008, states spent more than \$49 billion on corrections.
- The Bureau of Justice Statistics reports that only 46 percent of incarcerated individuals have a high school diploma or its equivalent.
- One in six jail inmates reports that he or she dropped out of school because he or she was convicted of a crime, was sent to a correctional facility, or was involved in illegal activities.
- [Only] about two-thirds of people in prison and jail were employed...during the month before they were arrested for their current offense.
- Nearly half of those leaving jail were earning less than \$600 per month immediately prior to their incarceration.
- Vocational program availability is very limited for jail inmates, with only five percent of jail jurisdictions offering vocational training. Many jail jurisdictions (33 percent) offer no educational or vocational training at all.



The JIB strives to provide technical assistance to municipalities in the development of employment focused reentry programs that promote public safety, attend to offender needs, and facilitate successful return to the community.

### Desired Outcomes

- ✓ Victim compensation and restitution
- ✓ Reduced victimization and recidivism
- ✓ Meaningful work experience and work ethics
- ✓ Public service through offender labor

### Assistance Available

The JIB is available to provide technical assistance in the following areas:

- ✓ Training and Networking Resources
- ✓ Program Assessment and Design
- ✓ Reentry Services
- ✓ Grant Resource Research
- ✓ Development of Community Partnerships
- ✓ Prison Industry Enhancement Certification (PIECP)

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Inmate develops institutional floor care skills at Yakima DOC

# The Benefits of Jail Industries

By Dean Mason

*Executive Director, Jail Industries Board*

The benefits of jail industries are just beginning to be understood by those not directly involved with these valuable programs. Wrongly thought of by some as “slave labor” and by others as “unfair competition,” more people every day are becoming aware of the benefits to society as a whole that jail industries provide. Offender advocates and labor organizations alike are realizing that jail industries make incarceration time more productive, prepare offenders for successful reentry, and develop a ready workforce that might not otherwise be available. Appropriately operated jail industries make incarceration more humane, do not take jobs away from the public, and do not unfairly compete with private sector business.

The generally accepted definition of a jail industry is one that, **“...uses jail inmate labor, to create a product or deliver a service, that has value, and for which inmates receive some form of compensation.”** Compensation does not necessarily mean wages. Offenders working in a jail industry might receive extra commissary, good time, special privileges, etc. The key is that they voluntarily work in the program and receive some sort of reward for their effort.

Jail industries are not just about “widget making.” While you might not operate an industries program that creates product, every jail operates at least one work program for offenders that provides a service to the jail, city, county, etc. Examples of these traditional jail industries are inmates working in the kitchen, janitorial, or laundry; just to name a few. Whether the industry provides a product or a service, **the real product of jail industries is the offenders themselves.**

Regardless of their length of stay, 100% of jail offenders not sentenced to prison will return to

the community. Even if sentenced to prison, 97% of all offenders eventually reenter society. The skills and pro-social behaviors they develop working in an industries program can be a key factor in their ability to avoid new crimes and costly re-incarceration, thus reducing recidivism.

While there has been little academic focus on the effect of jail industries involvement, research regarding the benefits of participation in [prison] correctional industries results in a nearly 8% reduction in recidivism, which is significant in comparison to many other program outcomes. Offender involvement in such programs shows a cost benefit of \$23.63 in taxpayer savings per \$1 of cost. This is one of the highest returns on investment from an offender change program. Based on the research, it is safe to assume that such programs in jail would yield similar social and financial benefits.

In the recently released Jail Industries Board video, [Working Inside-Out](#), Director of the Yakima County Department of Corrections, Steve Robertson, states that, “If you paid for all the laundry service, and if you paid for all the food service time...if you paid for all the work crew time that’s spent out there and...all the outside maintenance and the inside maintenance; last year we came out at nearly two million dollars worth of inmate labor time spent on all these different projects, so very quickly it racks up. It’s big money...and our jail’s budget is already 29 million dollars. If I had to put two plus million more on top of it, we’re [going to] have to do something pretty extreme. Waste of time, waste of effort, waste of resource... [that would be] bad management, so what we’re looking for is more expansion to our JI program.”

Aside from the financial benefits; however, the social benefits of jail industries are immeasurable; including safer jails, more resources for other critical social needs, fewer victims of crime, and a

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## WASHINGTON STATE JAIL STATISTICS

- THIRTY-EIGHT COUNTIES AND TWENTY CITIES OPERATE JAIL FACILITIES IN WASHINGTON STATE.
- THEIR COMBINED HOLDING CAPACITY IS APPROXIMATELY 13,620 INMATES.
- WA STATE JAIL STAFF COMPLETE OVER 300,000 BOOKINGS PER YEAR.
- NEARLY 100% OF THOSE INDIVIDUALS BOOKED INTO JAIL AND NOT SENTENCED TO PRISON WILL RETURN TO OUR COMMUNITIES WITHIN ONE YEAR.
- USE OF OFFENDER LABOR IN WASHINGTON STATE JAILS REDUCES THE TAX BURDEN ON CITIZENS BY AT LEAST TWENTY-FIVE MILLION (\$25,000,000) DOLLARS PER YEAR.

better sense of security and public safety for all. Add that to the personal gains that every offender achieves in terms of better self esteem, self worth, and a positive sense of their appropriate place in society, and the impact of jail industries becomes priceless.

Many offenders want to change — and *can* change with the right training, education, treatment, and support. All citizens of the state of Washington are as affected by offender re-entry as by the crimes those individuals originally committed. Formerly incarcerated individuals shop next to us in grocery stores, have children who attend school with our own, and spouses who work with us every day. They are sons and daughters, and friends and neighbors. It is in our collective best interest that people be given the tools to change *before* they return to the community. Well designed and managed jail industries are one of the best tools we have to accomplish that goal.



## Arming Offenders with “Soft Skills”

While a criminal background and lack of a significant employment history are major barriers to employment for offenders, many struggle with other deficiencies even when they do find a job. The ability to positively interact with others in the workplace, communicate clearly, problem solve, manage conflict and criticism, and make sound ethical decisions are some of the soft skills that many offenders lack or need to practice.

In April 2009, Washington State

Correctional Industries, in partnership with Dr. Steve Parese, offered a training for trainers of an innovative *soft skills* program, "Makin' It Work". The Jail Industries Board sponsored two jail staff, one each from Lewis and Kitsap Counties to attend the training.

*"Makin' It Work" is a 10-lesson classroom-based employment readiness program that offers ex-offenders the insights and skills needed to "code-switch" from the world of crime to that of work. Specifically, the program helps participants.*

- 1. Understand how their own attitudes and perceptions have justified illegal actions in the past.*
- 2. Gain new insights into employer expectations in the workplace, and mentally shift their own outlooks to be more successful on the job.*
- 3. Improve interpersonal skills needed to manage difficult workplace situations, such as handling criticism, expressing complaints, and solving everyday problems.*

*It then teaches interpersonal skills*

*needed to handle difficult workplace situations in a professional manner. (<http://steveparese.com/softskills.html>)*

The first classes at Correctional Industries sites have been very successful and well received by offenders and the Jail Industries Board hopes to see the same success at jails piloting the program. We will continue to explore this and other



opportunities to add skill-based training and certification to your jail industries programs.

**Stay tuned for future opportunities to become a soft skills trainer!**

## City of Kent Correctional Facility Finishes Year of Flagger Training

The Kent jail recently finished their fourth Washington State flagger certification course. They first delivered this program in March of 2008 to a group of ten offenders, with seven individuals receiving their flagger card. Based on that initial success, Lieutenant Curt Lutz applied for funds from the Jail Industry Board's Jail to Work: Cultivating Offender Reentry grant. The jail was awarded \$13,482 to offer additional classes and hire a not-for-profit agency to assist offenders with job search, track their employment, and report on any recidivism in the group.

Three more classes were held, approximately one per quarter, with the last class being held in March 2009. A total of 32 offenders were provided training, with 26 receiving their flagger card. This card is an offender's ticket to a potential job paying \$12 - \$18 per hour to start. Criminal history is not necessarily a barrier to employment in the entry level construction market.

We hope to have more data and news on the success or struggles of this group in the future.



## Whatcom County Operating a Horticulture Work Crew

Combining county resources with \$24,810 in funding from the Jail to Work: Cultivating Offender Reentry grant, the Whatcom County Jail developed a Horticulture Work Crew. Utilizing an existing staff with a background in teaching horticulture, the program delivers three phases of training for a total of 480 hours of instruction possible. As of April 30<sup>th</sup>, 78 offenders had participated in at least one phase of the training.

The Horticulture Work Crew is operated from the Whatcom County Interim Work Center, where a new greenhouse has been constructed to grow plant starts. The Horticulture Work Crew Program will produce and supply native species plants to local wetland and habitat restoration groups, while providing offenders the opportunity to learn the skills needed for employment by local

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farms, nurseries, and retail outlets. The program already has approximately 3,000 plants growing, has enlisted the aid of a dedicated Master Gardener, and is looking at opportunities for expansion.

The program will utilize partnerships with the local community college, Whatcom County Public Works, Whatcom County Conservation District (Special District Riparian Re-establishment Initiative), Whatcom County Master Gardeners, and the Washington State Employment Security Department (Northwest Area WorkSource).

The Jail Industries Board is very interested in replicating this program in other areas of the state. There is great potential for the development of a number of different offender work projects that such a program can feed into, including beautification and the development of carbon sequestration areas along the state's roads and highways.



The level of civilization in a society may be determined by entering its prisons.

-- **Fyodor Dostoyevsky**, Crime and Punishment

## PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

In the current economic climate, training is one area that many agencies are forced to cut first. It is important that, as practitioners, we all stay current on innovations and best practices in our career field. One fairly inexpensive way to do this on our own is to seek membership in professional associations.

Corrections is a specialized career field that is served by a number of fine professional associations. Membership in these associations provides career professionals with opportunities for education, training, networking, and personal and professional growth. Professional association membership also provides:

- ✓ Information about job availability
- ✓ Reports on the most recent developments in the field
- ✓ Newsletters and journals (many now available to members online as well as in hard copy)
- ✓ Reports on public issues that impact the profession
- ✓ Discussion of issues regarding professional ethical behavior
- ✓ Standards for the field
- ✓ Annual meetings
- ✓ Information sharing opportunities

All professional organizations rely heavily on the volunteer activities of members, even the larger national associations with a professional staff. These activities provide opportunities for serving on committees, planning and conducting events, and input to the direction of the association, your agency, and your career field. Four primary associations that can benefit Washington State jail managers and industries staff are:

### **National Correctional Industries Association (NCIA)**

Cost = \$45

Information - <http://www.nationalcia.org/>

### **American Jail Association**

Cost = \$48

Information - <http://www.aja.org/>

### **American Correctional Association**

Cost = \$35

Information - <http://www.aca.org/>

\*\*\*Includes a dual membership in the WA Correctional Association at no extra cost. ([www.wca2.org](http://www.wca2.org))

### **Washington State Jail Association**

Cost = \$15

Information - <http://www.wsja.com/>